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ABSTRACT

Reactions of the California Postsecondary Education Commission to task force recommendations about the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) are presented. EOPS provides services and financial aid to community college students who transfer to public four-year colleges. The task force concluded that existing comprehensive opportunity programs at all three public segments for low-income or otherwise disadvantaged students have given only limited priority to transfer students. While the Commission generally agrees with the task force recommendations, it believes that more fundamental improvements in the working relationships of existing programs are needed to increase the number of EOPS students who transfer to public universities and complete their baccalaureate programs. Two alternative strategies to assure a consistent continuum of services are identified: consolidating the existing state-funded programs into a single program; or further revising existing programs to make them more responsive to low-income and educationally disadvantaged students who begin their baccalaureate education in a community college. Specific recommendations for the California State University Educational Opportunity Program and the Community College EOPS program are included. (SW)

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COMMISSION COMMENTS ON THE INTERSEGMENTAL TASK FORCE REPORT

Facilitating the Transfer of Community College EOPS Students to California's Public Universities

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CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

Commission Report 85-25

Adopted April 15, 1985

COMMISSION COMMENTS ON THE INTERSEGMENTAL TASK FORCE REPORT, *FACILITATING THE TRANSFER OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE EOPS STUDENTS TO CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES*

The California Postsecondary Education Commission was directed through Assembly Bill 3775 (1984, Chacon) to convene an intersegmental Task Force to (1) assess existing services and financial assistance for Community College Extended Opportunity Programs and Services students who transfer to public colleges and universities, and (2) offer recommendations, if needed, to facilitate their transfer. As requested, the Task Force submitted its report, Facilitating the Transfer of Community College EOPS Students to California's Public Universities, to the legislative fiscal committees in February.

The basic conclusion presented by the Task Force is that the existing comprehensive opportunity programs at all three public segments for low-income or otherwise disadvantaged students have given only limited priority to transfer students:

- The Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) in the Community Colleges were not established with a priority for serving potential transfer students and have tended to adopt the particular priorities of the individual colleges.

- In the State University, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) has given priority to first-time freshmen, and until 1983-84, the State University limited the proportion of students who could be accepted into EOP through regular admission -- which further limited the number of transfer students served by the program.

- Similarly, University of California programs have been oriented toward recruiting and serving first-time freshmen rather than transfer students.

The Task Force has recommended that efforts to facilitate the transfer process for EOPS students occur on three levels: (1) general institutional improvement of transfer opportunities; (2) improved inter-program compatibility and incentives to attract and serve transfer students; and (3) operational improvements of each program to facilitate transfer. To this end, the Task Force has presented 12 recommendations in its report.

The Commission generally agrees with the Task Force recommendations and acknowledges the improvements to enhance the transfer process that Community Colleges are making in the operation of EOPS. But the Commission also believes that more fundamental improvements in the working relationships of the existing programs are needed if the number of EOPS students who transfer to public universities and complete their baccalaureate programs is to be increased substantially.

As a basis for reviewing both the Task Force report and, more generally, the operations of the State-funded equal educational opportunity programs of the three segments, the Commission has made two assumptions:

1. One of the major goals of California's equal educational opportunity efforts is to increase the number of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students who complete university study with a baccalaureate degree; and

2. Comprehensive State-funded programs for low-income and educationally disadvantaged students in the three segments should cooperate to provide continuity of service for those students who chose to begin their baccalaureate program at Community Colleges and subsequently transfer to public universities.

Available data and analyses, including those presented by the Task Force, indicate that existing efforts could be improved in working toward the achievement of these two assumptions. Specifically, the Commission concludes:

- The Community Colleges' Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) have only recently adopted the specific goal of assisting students to transfer to a baccalaureate-awarding institution. The Chancellor's Office of the Community Colleges reports that in 1983-84 less than 35 percent of the colleges had a goal for EOPS of assisting students to transfer to four-year institutions. The enactment of AB 3775 in 1984 directed the Board of Governors to establish by January 1, 1986, minimum standards for several aspects of the operations of EOPS, including the provision of transfer services. This step, as well as the action by the Board of Governors in June 1984 to revise the program goals for EOPS to include transfer, assures that transfer will be one of the priorities of EOPS in the near future.

- The State University's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) has not had a strong record in increasing the number of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students who graduate with baccalaureate degrees. Between 1979-80 and 1982-83, the number of its EOP students who graduated decreased from 848 to 691. The Chancellor's Office reports that only some 12 percent of the students who enter the University as "disadvantaged-exception admits" (most of whom are EOP students) complete their degree program within six years, compared to a 35 percent rate for all students (the California State University, 1983).

- The State University gives priority for admission into its Educational Opportunity Program to high-risk "exception admit" students over regularly admissible students, and to first-time freshmen over transfer students. This priority contrasts with the admissions priorities of the State University as a whole, which give priority to regularly admissible California residents who have successfully completed the first two years of their baccalaureate program at a California Community College before residents entering at the freshman or sophomore levels. As a consequence, many successful EOPS transfer students who gain admission to the State University may no longer be eligible for the comprehensive support services that helped them achieve academic success in a Community College.

- The University of California's comprehensive student affirmative action and educational opportunity programs have given priority to serving secondary school students and first-time freshmen rather than Community College transfer students. This priority is responsive to legislative directives, which have funded the University to establish early outreach services to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students who graduate from high school eligible to enroll in the University. However, the Legislature has provided relatively few funds to the University for similar outreach services in the Community Colleges.

- The two existing comprehensive State-funded programs -- EOPS in the Community Colleges and EOP in the State University -- have not worked together effectively over the 15 years of their existence to provide a consistent continuum of services to educationally and economically disadvantaged students who chose to begin their baccalaureate program at a Community College and subsequently transfer to a public university. This situation has been acknowledged previously by the Commission, and it is one of the reasons why the Legislature and Governor enacted AB 3775.

- The Governor has proposed approximately $3.4 million for transfer centers on selected Community College campuses, with cooperative involvement by University and State University staff. These projects, which are scheduled to begin in Fall 1985, will seek to increase the number of students transferring to four-year institutions and should, therefore, improve available services for EOPS students.

The implementation of the Task Force's recommendations will begin to promote a more cooperative working relationship between these two programs and thereby better serve EOPS students. Nonetheless, the Commission believes that implementation of these recommendations will still not achieve the goals of its 1980 proposal that "The systemwide offices of the California State University and Colleges, the University of California, and the California Community Colleges should develop and implement an action plan to facilitate the transfer of students from the Community College EOPS program into the University and State University EOP programs" (p. 222).

In recommending those actions, the Commission concluded that "while it is premature to revise the relevant statutes in order to make the programs explicitly compatible, the systemwide offices should place a high priority on determining the extent of the problem and developing alternatives to solve it."

The Commission reemphasizes the need for the systemwide offices of the three segments to assure that a consistent continuum of services is available to these students. Two alternative strategies are available to achieve this desired condition. One alternative might involve consolidating the existing State-funded programs into a single program jointly administered by the Board of Trustees of the State University and the Board of Governors of the Community Colleges that (1) continues those services that are essential for the academic success of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students, (2) maintains a single set of eligibility criteria for entrance to and continuation in the program, (3) supports students as they transfer from one institution to another, as long as they make satisfactory academic progress and are still in need of services, and (4) is jointly administered by the systemwide offices of the three segments.

The second alternative is to make further revisions in the existing programs so they are more responsive in serving those low-income and educationally disadvantaged students who choose to begin their baccalaureate education in a Community College. At the present time, the Commission continues to advocate modifications in the existing programs as the more appropriate method to increase substantially the number of EOPS students who transfer to public universities and complete baccalaureate programs. Accordingly, the following recommendations are presented:

1. The State University should revise its priorities for admission to EOP so that they are similar to its general enrollment and admission priorities, as provided in Section 66202 of the Education Code. The primary goal of EOP should be to increase the number of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students who receive baccalaureate degrees. The achievement of this objective will be promoted by giving priority for admission to EOP to those low-income and educationally disadvantaged students who have already completed two years of collegiate study at a Community College. This change in priority will also better guarantee that successful EOPS students are not lost in the transfer process. This recommendation can be implemented either by expanding funding for the State University's EOP to serve these additional students or by improved working relationships between EOPS and EOP campus directors to better serve potential transfer students, as specified below.

2. Community College EOPS campus directors and their State University EOP counterparts should develop formal working agreements to better serve all low-income and educationally disadvantaged first-time freshmen who are EOP eligible but who cannot be admitted to EOP because of limited campus resources. These agreements should specify that these students will receive comprehensive academic counseling about course and transfer requirements, including the appropriate Community College courses to complete and the grade-point average to achieve so that they can be admitted to the State University after one or more years of Community College study. Assurance should also be provided to these students that their academic success in Community College will guarantee their eligibility for EOP, if the student is still in need of these services.

3. Commission staff, in cooperation with staff from the systemwide offices of the California State University and the California Community Colleges, should review alternative methods to use incentives in allocating funds to the various campuses.

4. The Commission requests a follow-up report to be completed prior to November 1986 about the extent to which the 12 recommendations of the Task Force and these three Commission recommendations have been implemented and the transfer process for EOPS students has improved.

REFERENCES

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The California Postsecondary Education Commission was created by the Legislature and the Governor in 1974 as the successor to the California Coordinating Council for Higher Education in order to coordinate and plan for education in California beyond high school. As a state agency, the Commission is responsible for assuring that the State's resources for postsecondary education are utilized effectively and efficiently; for promoting diversity, innovation, and responsiveness to the needs of students and society; and for advising the Legislature and the Governor on statewide educational policy and funding.

The Commission consists of 15 members. Nine represent the general public, with three each appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Governor. The other six represent the major educational systems of the State.

The Commission holds regular public meetings throughout the year at which it takes action on staff studies and adopts positions on legislative proposals affecting postsecondary education. Further information about the Commission, its meetings, its staff, and its other publications may be obtained from the Commission offices at 1020 Twelfth Street, Sacramento, California 95814; telephone (916) 445-7933.

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